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A FUNERAL SERMON

Occasion'd by the

DEATH

Of the Reverend

Mr. Joseph Maisters,

Late Minister of the Gospel.

Preach'd APRIL 21, 1717.

By JEREMIAH HUNT.

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СЕРМОН

ПРАВДЫ

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TO THE
DESCENDANTS
Of the Reverend
Mr. J. MAISTERS.
AND THE
SOCIETY
To which he stood related as
PASTOR.

*IT is owing to the Request and Application
you made me, and the great Esteem I had
for Reverend Mr. MAISTERS, that I am pre-
vail'd with to make a Publication of this Dis-
course. You were pleas'd to approve of it when
preach'd, and apprehend it might be of Ser-
vice if publish'd, and with that View I suffer
it to appear abroad.*

The Dedication.

I shall say little of the Performance. You who are his Descendants are sensible, that the Character I have given of your deservedly esteem'd Father, is far from being outragious and beyond Life; You may justly complain the Draught is in too small a Size, and not a proper Length; but I am sure you lov'd the Original too well, to disregard the Copy (if in any Degree resembling) though it be in Miniature. If it assists You in the Imitation of the Graces which shone with a peculiar Lustre in Him, I gain my Wish, and attain my Intention.

And with Regard to You, to whom he stood related as Bishop, the best Way You can take to express the Regard You have to the Memory of that great Man, is, to be influenced by His Doctrine, and to imitate his Example; which that You may do, is the sincere and hearty Prayer of,

Your Friend and Servant,

JER. HUNT.

A

FUNERAL SERMON

On the Reverend

Mr. J. MAISTERS.

Prov. xiv. 32.

— *But the righteous hath Hope in his Death.* The whole Verse runs thus; *The wicked is driven away in his Wickedness, but the Righteous hath Hope in his Death.*

TH E Suitableness of these Words to the sad and melancholy Occasion which hath determined me to fix upon them, appears on the first View. To attempt the finding a Connexion in a Chapter made up of beautiful but independent Sentences, would be vain and ridiculous. I shall therefore immediately address myself to give you the Sense of the Words, and then make proper and suitable Application.

B

S. I. To

§ I. To set before you the Meaning of the Text.

The Term *Righteous* is sometimes us'd in a restrain'd and limited Sense, to denote the Person who is dispos'd to perform to another, what Justice and Equity may demand, and give a rightful Claim to.

In this Manner we are to understand it, when it is made Use of as Part of the Character of Simeon, Luke 2. 25. *And behold there was in Jerusalem a Man whose Name was Simeon, and the same Man was just and devout.* When the Apostle tells us, Rom. 5. 7. *For scarcely for a righteous Man will one die,* it cannot be taken in any other Meaning than to express one strictly just, as the following Words make appear, *yet peradventure for a good Man,* a kind and beneficent Man, *some would even dare to die.* In the same confin'd Sense we have the Expression *Righteousness* made Use of in Scripture, Luke 1. 74, 75. *That we might serve him without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Life.*

In other Places the Word *Righteous* is taken in a larger Sense, and signifies one who in the Disposition of his Mind, and the Government of his Life, is brought to a sincere Conformity to the Divine Precepts. The Character of Zacharias and Elizabeth is thus describ'd, Luke 1. 16. *And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless.* To enumerate all the Places wherein the Term *Righteousness* is us'd in this wide and extensive Meaning, would be endless; Dan. 12. 3. Mat. 5. 6. Chap. 5. 20, &c.

And that the Expression *Righteous* in our Text is to be understood in its utmost Latitude, will appear evident from the large Extent in which the Word *Wicked* must be undeniably taken in the former Part of the Verse, to which it stands directly the

oppos'd. *The Righteous hath Hope in his Death*, will be best understood by considering the first Clause of the Sentence. *The Wicked*, the Man who in his Temper and Life, is the Reverse to what the Nature and Will of God recommend and enjoin, *is driven away*, with Force and Violence, as Chaff is before a strong and tempestuous Wind, *in his Wickedness*, i. e. either on the Account of his Vice, and the LXX take it this Way, as appears from their rendering the last Part of the Aphorism thus, *but the Righteous hath Confidence in or by his Holiness*, for which Translation indeed there is not the least Foundation in the Hebrew Text : Or (which I take to be the justest Interpretation) *in his evil*, meaning by the Expression, Distress and Trouble, in which Sense the Word is used by our Saviour, Mat. 6. 34. *Sufficient to the Day is the Evil thereof*; and then the two Parts of the Sentence will appear in an exact and beautiful Opposition. That whereas the wicked, whatever Security he may promise to himself while his State is smooth, and his Circumstances easie and calm, when Clouds break upon him, and Distress on every Side invades him, has no Stand, but is hurry'd away as Chaff, by the Rapidity of a violent Wind ; the good Man, on the contrary, who fears God, and has Regard to his Laws, in the Time of greatest Distress which can befall him, and even in that which is the most shocking to human Nature, Death it self, feels under him a firm Foundation, and beyond has the Support which a well-grounded Hope is capable of imparting. *The Righteous hath Hope in his Death*. You see then the Design of this Remark is, to represent the Difference which there is between the Wicked and the Righteous in the Day of Trouble, Calamity and Death. In discoursing farrelyer upon it, I shall,

- I. Give you a fuller Account of Righteousness, and a larger Character of a good Man.
- II. Shew in what Way this, and Sentences of the like Nature, are to be understood.
- III. Represent to you by what Principles the Truth of this Aphorism may be fully evinc'd.
- IV. Answer an Objection that may be offer'd against the Truth of it.

I. Give you a fuller Account of Righteousness, and a larger Character of a good Man.

The Measure of Righteousness is Law. By which I would be understood to intend the Will of one who has a Right to govern us, and whose Power is such as to reward the obedient, and punish the disobedient, discover'd in such a Degree of Clearness, as is sufficient to make it be known to Persons who give sincere Application to it. God the first Cause, and Maker of all Things, will be readily own'd by every one to be our rightful Sovereign, and because Creator, to be possess'd of Power sufficient to render such who choose to act agreeably to his Pleasure happy, and those who run contrary to it, miserable. That he has discover'd his *Will*, which is of the Nature of a Law to us, will appear from a moderate Attention to our reasonable Make. We find upon a little Reflection, that as we stand related to God, who is the first and most perfect Being, and the Original of all other Beings; and to a Variety of Creatures, deriv'd from him as well as our selves, many of which are endued with the like intelligent Powers that we feel in our own Frame; there will arise from hence many considerable Offices, which will be binding and obligatory upon us, as long as the Relation from whence they result, shall continue.

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Some Principles and Practices have an Excellency and Corneliness in them, and others on the contrary, have in them Ugliness and Deformity. And the Sight is not better fitted to take in Colours, and to discern the Difference there is between one Colour and another, than the Understanding is to distinguish Good and Evil, at least in the greater Lines. And with Regard to the other Cases, which are attended with more Difficulty, Integrity will be a secure Guide to our Conduct. In a Word, Capacity infers Obligation, and this with just Reason is called the Law of Nature; or the Law which is settled in our reasonable Frame, and ought to be esteemed by us the Voice of God, from the Observance of which, we cannot be disoblig'd, whilst the same Relations remain.

But since by the unhappy Degeneracy and Corruption which has prevail'd among Mankind, this Light of Nature has been obscur'd, and render'd too feeble to lead us so effectually to the Happiness our Nature is capable of receiving; it has pleased the kind Author of our Beings, to make known his Will to us in a Way different from the former, which is call'd *Revelation*. And in Regard it has been in several Parts, as well as in *different Manners*, as the Apostle expresses it, *Heb. 1. 1.* this Law must accordingly vary: The better to help our Conception of it, we may divide it into Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. We are happily under the last, which is so compleat and perfect, as to have occasion'd the removing the Obligation of the former.

This Divine Law which we are under, is deliver'd to us by Jesus the Messiah, who was sent by the Father, the First and the Supream, to be our Teacher, Redeemer, Law-giver, Head and Judge. The Pretension He made to a Commission He receiv'd from his

his Father, was fully made to appear, by the Excellency of his Doctrine, the Perfection of his Life, the Variety of Miracles he was empowered to work, the imparting the same Ability to his Apostles, the Reality of his Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven, and the giving of extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Spirit to his Disciples, according to his own Prediction, and the Promise of the Father. Upon these Accounts it is, that with Reason he expects we should believe in him, and entertain the Institution he is the Founder of, and give up our selves to be directed and govern'd by it. In the Law of Faith * we have the various Instances and Rules of Duty, in Reference to God, others, and our selves, which (tho' darkened by the Pravity of human Conduct) the Light of Nature renders us capable of discerning in a Degree, set in a fuller Light, and recommended to our Practice by Divine Authority; and the Application of them to all the different Turns and Occasions that spring up and arise in Life, made sensible and easie by the perfect and unspotted Pattern of its Author. This Religion consisting of such Precepts, as have a real Goodness and intrinick Excellency in them, excepting Baptism, whereby we enter into the Profession of it, and the Lord's Supper, by which we retain a Memory of the great Ends of the Founder's Death; is attended with the greatest Encouragements, and enforc'd by the strongest Motives. When any by Inadvertency, Paffion, and the Strength of Temptation, unhappily deviate from any of its Commands, a standing Atonement is provided to animate to a Return, and give Security to a guilty Mind, of the Success thereof; to which is added, an express Promise of the Divine

* Rom. iii. 27. 1 Cor. ix. 21.

Spirit to assist the future Conduct, and support under all Trials this Life is incident to ; and as a Reward, at last of a Crown of Glory, and an unfading Inheritance, to be confer'd on the sincere, who in this State remain'd stedfast and constant, and press'd on towards Perfection. From the Account we have given of the Law of Christianity, we may easily draw the Character, and represent the Description of a righteous Man, consider'd under this Institution, which is of the greatest Importance and Concern to us.

He is one who is desirous of acting agreeable to the Dictates of his Reason, which he regards as given him by his Creator, to guide and direct his Actions. He is so far from looking upon himself as under no Obligation to a Behaviour becoming the Dignity of that reasonable Nature he is endued with, that * *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report ; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise,* he steadily thinks upon, and ardently pursues ; he is firmly perswaded, that no external Circumstances can free him from the Obligation, to perform what the Nature of Things recommends to his Practice. He apprehends Revealed Religion to design his Recovery to the true Perfection, and real Happiness of reasonable and intelligent Nature.

When upon proper Grounds he is convinc'd the Christian Doctrine to be of a Divine Original, he believes and embraces it as such, and inasmuch as he is instructed therein, that Faith is not available when unattended with good Works, the natural Producti-

* Phil. iv. 8.

on of it, when true and genuine; He sincerely, and without Reserve, resigns himself to the Measures of Government the Messiah lays down in his Kingdom. He entertains such Sentiments, and expresses such Affections and Behaviour to one God, and one Mediator, as he conceives to be agreeable to Revelation.

He is sensible since this Religion comes from God, who knows the Heart, and is intended to give Direction to the inward Inclinations, Desires, and Designs, that he is obliged, as far as may be, to regulate them; and therefore he makes it his great Concern, by the Divine Aid, to suppress every criminal Thought, and lay a Restraint upon every immoderate Desire. He is well assur'd, that the most effectual Method to compass this, is by fervent Prayer, and constant Endeavour, to gain a spiritual Temper and Disposition of Mind. He therefore frequently converses with Heaven, to get a just Contempt of Earth, and that with greater Ease he may rein and manage his Affections to the Objects of this present Life.

Above all he is solicitous, to make it evident to his own Mind, that he is sincere. For that Reason he takes a View of the Law of Faith in its proper Extent, and in Regard that the same Authority which enjoins one Command, recommends the Practice of the whole, without fixing upon the Precepts which may be attended with the least Difficulty to him, and discarding others, which may run more counter to his Complexion, he endeavours to render an universal Submission to the Divine Will, and in a particular Manner guards against those Weaknesses, to which, through the strong Byas of his peculiar Temper, he may lie most open and expos'd.

He carefully regards the Principles he acts from ; and what he does in Religion, is not to be seen of Men, and gain Applause, but that he may approve himself to God, and have the Satisfaction which arises from a calm and serene Mind. He does not speak of Religion, and mean the World. The great Motive which influences him is not deriv'd from this World, but taken from the Prospect of the other.

And since this Religion to which He desires to conform, recommends the making constant Progress, and pressing after a State of Perfection ; he continually endeavours to grow in Knowledge, with a Design he may advance in Holiness. The bare performance of the Duties of Christianity, does not satisfie and content him ; the doing them with the greatest ease (every degree of Reluctance being remov'd) and in the best manner, is his daily Aim, and steady Pursuit. For this purpose, he ever implores the Assurances of the Spirit of God.

In a Word, knowing, that it is necessary in order to reach the peculiar Reward promis'd in the Gospel, to remain firm and steadfast, this is the concern which lies nearest his Heart, and which awakens in him the greatest Solitude he ever feels, that he may hold out and persevere, till he arrives safe to the Crown of Life.

II. Having thus given You the draught of a righteous Man, in that Point of View, in which Christianity represents him ; I proceed to the second Head, which was to show, in what way this, and Sentences of the like Nature are to be understood.

When moral Remarks are form'd, drawn off by long and close Application to the course of Things, and consequences of Actions, and the plain and express

press Declarations of the Divine Will ; that there are a few Exceptions running counter, will be no real Prejudice against their Truth, since it is a settled Rule, by which they are explain'd, that they for the most Part, and in the general, hold Good.

That there should be some rare Exceptions, may arise from some peculiar and uncommon Circumstance of the Case. Besides, in Sentences of a moral Nature, there may be a considerable Difference in the degree of the suppos'd Characters. To illustrate this by Instances, *Train up a Child in the Way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* The design of the Aphorism is, to show the Force and Continuance of early Principles and Habits, some Examples you have of bearing down their powerful Influence, arising from peculiar Genius, or unusual Accidents ; but generally, and for the most Part, the Observation is found true in Experience. In like manner, when Solomon remarks in the Text, *That the wicked is driven away in his Evil, but the righteous hath hope in his Death* ; it is not enough to invalidate the Truth of this Proverb, that you may have some (tho' few) Instances to the contrary, especially, when there is Place for such different Degrees in the two Characters. I come now,

III. To represent to you, by what Principles the Truth of this Aphorism (taking in the foregoing Rule) may be fully evinc'd ; and I shall attempt to show it in the Light of Nature, and Divine Revelation.

I. The Light of Nature will serve to evidence the Truth of it. By the same way we arrive to the Knowledge of the Being of a God, the first Cause of all other Beings ; we gain some Apprehensions (tho'

(tho' imperfect) of the Excellencies of his Nature, and cannot but conceive Him as well Righteous and Holy, as Wise and Powerful, and the Standard of Imitation to all the Beings, who are endued with Power capable of attaining the Acknowledgment of his Existence. We cannot avoid being convinc'd, that He has a Right to govern us, and give Measures to regulate our Behaviour. The Apprehension that He must be pleas'd with the Persons, who endeavour to be acquainted with his Will, and comply with it; and on the contrary, have resentment to such, who neglect to regard his Pleasure, and be brought to a resemblance of him, which in a Degree they are made capable of attaining, lies too obvious, and is too easie not to be clearly discern'd, and readily admitted. The greater strokes of moral Good and Evil, lie too open to escape Notice; and the Beauty of the one, and Deformity of the other, is so clear as to make the former to be attended with Satisfaction of Mind, and Expectation of Favour, when comply'd with; and the latter, when committed, with Chagrin and fear of Divine Displeasure.

This the wise *Heathens* acknowledge, and with admirable Skill, and inimitable Elegance of Dress, some of them describe the frightful Horrors of a guilty Mind, and paint the delightful Calm and pleasing Hope of a Mind adorned with Purity and Virtue.

These Fears of the Wicked, and Expectations of the Righteous, have been manag'd happily enough by some Writers; as an Argument to render probable the Distribution of future Rewards and Punishments.

It is true indeed, that by the variety of Amusements, which the Vicious make use of to divert serious Thought, and cool Reflection, they can make a

Shift to be tolerably well at ease with themselves, whilst Prosperity smiles upon them, and Affairs go on smoothly; but when the Scene varies, and Distress awakens the Mind to a review of their Actions, they feel racking Fears and torturing Pangs to arise in their disturb'd Consciences. On the contrary, the Righteous, conscious of having a sincere Desire, and constant Endeavour to approve themselves to the first Cause, their Creator and Governor, from an Apprehension of his Goodness, cannot but be free from Horror, and entertain an Expectation of being distinguish'd by Marks of Favour in another State, in Proportion to the Light, wherein that State is represented to them. This may,

II. Be made farther to appear, by plain and express Places of Holy Scripture.

* *He will keep the Feet of his Saints, and the Wicked shall be silent in Darkness, for by Strength shall no Man prevail. The Adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to Pieces, out of Heaven shall He thunder upon them.*
 † *My Defence is of God, which saith the Upright in Heart. God judgeth the Righteous, and God is angry with the Wicked every Day. If he turn not, he will whet his Sword, he hath bent his Bow, and made it ready. Again, || The Wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God.* ** *The Lord trieth the Righteous, but the Wicked, and him that loveth Violence, his Soul hateth. Upon the Wicked he shall rain Snares, Fire and Brimstone, and an horrible Tempest: this shall be the Portion of their Cup. For the Righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, his Coun-*

* 1 Sam. ii. 9, 10. † Psalm vii. 10, 11, 12. || Psalm ix. 17.
 ** Psalm xi. 5, 6, 7.

rence doth behold the Upright. * Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.— Evil shall slay the Wicked. † Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright, for the end of that Man is Peace. But the Transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the Wicked shall be cut off. But the Salvation of the Righteous is of the Lord, he is their Strength in the Time of Trouble. Again, || The Righteousness of the Perfect shall direct his Way: But the Wicked shall fall by his own Wickedness. The Righteousness of the Upright shall deliver them: But Transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness. When a wicked Man dieth, his Expectation shall perish, and the Hope of unjust Men perisheth. And to name no more out of the Old Testament (for it would be endless to cite from thence all the Passages which are proper to our present Argument) the Prophet Isaiah describes, ** The Wicked like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt. And adds, There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked. On the contrary, God is introduc'd saying, I dwell in the high and holy Place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Hearts of the contrite Ones.

The same strain runs thro' the Christian Doctrine. † Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness: For they shall be filled. Blessed are the pure in Heart: For they (alone) shall see God. ||| Follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord. *** Know ye not that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. And

* Psalm xxxiv. 19, 21. † Psalm xxxvii. 37, 38, 39. || Prov. xi. 5. ** Isa. lvii. 20, 21, ver. 15. †† Mat. v. 6, 8. ||| Heb. xii. 14. *** 1 Cor. vi. 9.

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again; That they which do such Things shall not inherie the Kingdom of God, but the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Peace, Joy, &c. * To them who by patient Continuance in well doing, seek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath. Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. But Glory, Honour and Peace to every Man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, for there is no Respect of Persons with God. And when our Saviour had finish'd the admirable Discourse which is called his Sermon on the Mount, he adds, † Whosoever heareth these Sayings of mine and doth them, I will liken him unto the wise Man, which built his House upon a Rock: And the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew and beat upon that House, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a Rock. The Righteous hath Hope in his Death. And every one that heareth these Sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand: and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew and beat upon that House, and it fell, and great was the Fall thereof. The wicked is driven away in his Evil. I proceed now to the 4th and last Head.

IV. To answer an Objection that may be offer'd against the Remark the wise Man makes in our Text, *The Wicked is driven away in his Evil, but the Righteous Man hath Hope in his Death.*

Do we not often find the Righteous to droop and sink in a Time of Trouble and Distress, and appear as if their Hope fail'd, as well as their Heart and

* Rom. 2. 7, 8, 9. † Mat. 7. 24, 25, 26, 27.

Flesh? Does not the devout Psalmist complain of the Prosperity of the Wicked, that *there are no Bands in their Death, but their Strength is firm, they are not in Trouble like other Men, neither are they plagued as other Men*, Psal. 73. 3, 4, 5. and in the 12th Verse, *Behold these are the ungodly, who prosper in the World, they increase in Riches?*

To give a full Reply to this Objection would require a long Discourse, I shall therefore offer only such Hints as may serve to abate the Force of the Difficulty, if not entirely remove it. Not to repeat what we before mention'd, that a few Exceptions are not a just and reasonable Prejudice against the Truth of this Aphorism; it is possible that we who judge by Appearances may be mistaken, and apprehend, through Misrepresentations, a Person wicked who deserves not really that Character; and another who is of our Perswasion, and has our peculiar Turn of Thought, righteous, when he only skilfully wears the Mask. But admit we judge according to the Justnes of Character, we are liable to mistake the Case another Way: We may take Sturdiness of Temper, and Sullenness of Humour in the Man of Vice, to be Peace and Composednes of Mind; and the Mixture of Fear which attends the Death of some good Men, in an Affair of no less Importance than Eternal Happiness, to be an entire Failure of Hope; when between these, upon Reflection we shall find a wide Difference. Besides, there are so many Degrees in the different Characters of wicked and righteous, that the former depending on some good Actions which they have done; and the latter, conscious of numberless Imperfections which have attended their Life, at least at some Intervals, and in a few Instances, may fall into a Mistake of their real and proper State, and yet

yet no reasonable Ground to call the Truth of this Remark into Question. We may farther add, that the Righteous may for a Time seem to be in such deep Distress of Mind, as to have Support clean removed from them (*Psal. 78. 8.*) and yet, as the Psalmist expresses it (*Psal. 37. 6.*) *God shall at last bring forth their Righteousness as the Light, and their Judgment as the Noon-day.* Moreover, there may be peculiar Reasons assign'd, why some good Men may want a considerable Degree of Hope, and yet the Aphorism be regarded as generally true. They may not have formed so clear and distinct a Knowledge of the Principles of Religion as is necessary to this Purpose; and may be so unhappy as to labour under the Inconvenience of Melancholy in their Make and Complexion. And with Regard to the Passages cited out of the Psalm, compos'd by *Asaph*, which seem to be the main Strels of the Objection, if we duely attend to them, we shall find their true Meaning to lie another Way. The Prophet falling under great and considerable Trials, and remarking at that Time the Prosperity of the Wicked, had a great Variety of irregular Emotions springing up in himself, *I was envious at the foolish*; and, as is natural when a Crowd of Thoughts arise in the Mind, deeply tinctur'd with Uneasiness and peculiar Sorrow, he makes sad and heavy Complaints; *But as for me, my Feet were almost gone, my Steps had well nigh slipt.* These are the ungodly who prosper in the World. Verily I have cleansed my Heart in vain, and wash'd my Hands in Innocence. Are all these Turns of Thought such as are to be entertain'd by us as strictly true? No, they are heighten'd beyond due Bounds, by the Disorder which the Affections had rais'd in his Mind, ver. 22. *So foolish was I and ignorant.* How he recover'd

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he tells us, ver. 17. *I went into the Sanctuary of God, then understood I their End ; surely thou didst set them in slippery Places, thou castest them down into Destruction. Now are they brought into Desolation, as in a Moment, they are utterly consumed with Terrors.* Thus I have finish'd the explicatory Part, and nothing now remains, but

II. To make proper and suitable Application.

1. From what we have offer'd we may remark, the Weakness and Hazard of the Hope of Wicked Men.

By Hope is meant an Expectation of Good, and as it refers to God, in a Way agreeable to his Nature, and the Declarations of his Will ; and unless it be thus regulated, it is no other than vain Presumption. Whether the Wicked have a real Hope or only a Feint, may admit Dispute. The Expectation which at any Time they would make others believe they have, is form'd upon general and indistinct Ideas of Divine Mercy, and seems to arise rather from an Inclination which there is in human Nature, in an uneasy Turn of Thought, to fly to any Thing which may afford Relief, than a Sufficiency discern'd in the Principle ; as appears from a Backwardness they express to enter into serious Reflection, and a ready Engagement in all the Diversions of Sense, whereby they may lessen and abate the Uneasiness which they are sensible would arise from the View of their irregular Behaviour. But suppose they do really entertain a Hope, how unreasonably sanguine must that Expectation be, which is conceived against the Course of Things, the Nature of God, and the express Declarations of his Pleasure to Mankind ? *Abraham* did indeed hope against Hope : He did believe he should have an Heir, though it was contrary to the usual Course of

Nature, yet he had the express Promise of God, who is the Author of that Nature, and who is ever faithful to his Word. But these Persons who have continually affronted him, and infring'd the equitable Laws he has given them, have no Reason to imagine he will stay the Course of Things, or prevent the usual Result of Actions in their Favour, contrary to the Plan and Scheme he has wisely fix'd and settled. Much less that he should lay aside his Nature, and cease to be righteous and holy, and to make a Distinction (as becomes a wise Governour) between such as sincerely serve him, and those who wilfully and impenitently offend ; and that too against the clearest Declarations of his Word. Good God ! That any who are call'd rational, should entertain so ungrounded and delusive a Hope, and in so important an Affair ; a Concern of such vast Consequence, as Support under the greatest Distress, and Hope in Death of a future Reward of endless and inexpressible Happiness. Suffer me therefore,

2. To apply to such who are so unhappy as to engage in a sinful Course of Life.

There is nothing, one would think, should have greater Force of Argument to prevail with you, to break off immediately that Course of Vice you are engaged in, than the Dread and Horror, Anguish and Despondency of Mind, you are likely to fall into, at a Time when you will stand in most need of Relief. You it may be now are in a vigorous State of Health, all Things around you are easie and prosperous, your Spirits lively and brisk ; and with so mighty a Relish you take in the Sweets and Comforts of this Life, as that you have no more Leisure than Inclination for serious Thought and calm Reflection. But since the *Wicked is driven away in his Evil*, what a Change will there be when great Trouble and

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Calamity assault you, and whether you desire it or no, your Mind shall be forc'd to Attention ? When the outward Objects lose their former Power to charm, and your Thoughts are call'd inward, how sad and bitter then will the Remembrance be, of those Sins which were committed by you with Pleasure and Greediness ?

Will you not then look upon them with the utmost Horror of Mind, and *fearful Expectation of Judgment, and fiery Indignation to consume?* And with a thousand Times you had not been so foolish as to have committed them ? Will not a deadly Damp then pierce your guilty Soul ? How, when your Conscience is alarm'd, and nothing to divert its sad and bitter Reproaches, will you have Courage to look up to a righteous and angry God ? Will not the Terror of the Almighty make you afraid, and occasion you to shrink back and cleave fast to this Life, till with Force and Violence you are hurried away ? To imagine only the last and dismal Scene of a sensible Sinner's dying ; a Mind wounded with Guilt and Anguish, looking up with Marks of sad Dismay to an incensed God, receiving no other Returns from him (though otherwise kind and good) than piercing Arrows which stick fast, rankle and fester, clasping with Horror the Phantom-World which now deludes his Grasp, and feeling to his Amazement his Ground give Way and yield ; would raise great Compassion in a Person of Humanity : and shall it not, Sinner, excite Concern in thee, when thou art in Danger of having it thy own Case ? Can't thou in a careless Manner go on in the Ways of Sin, when thou hast so much Reason to apprehend the Issue and Consequence will be so unhappy ? *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die in such Distress, and pass into greater afterwards.*

3. This Argument recommends Religion, and is a powerful Motive and great Encouragement to a righteous and holy Life.

It is Part of the Character of a wise and considerate Man, to make the best Provision possible against all the Obstructions to his Peace and Happiness, which may at any Time spring up and arise; as well as pursue constantly what may make for his real Satisfaction, and lasting Tranquility. And since it is impracticable, in passing through this Life, to avoid falling under Distress and Calamity, and at last Death, he sedately considers what will best support and conduct him through that needful Time, and in Regard he has the strongest Reason to believe the righteous and good Man has the Advantage lying on his Side, he carefully presses after the Character; being sensible there is nothing of greater Moment and Concern to him, than Peace and Calmness of Mind in Life, and Support and Comfort in Death. He takes all proper Methods to strengthen and fortify his Resolution, and when the Degree of Hope and Comfort in the Time of Death, bears a suitable Proportion to the Advances which are made in Righteousness, he pursues with Vigour, Increase and Improvement. With this View he often represents to his Mind the Guilt and Horror which accompany the Death of bad Men, and thereby gives new Life to the Purposes he before had form'd, to decline and shun Temptations to Sin; and, on the contrary, the Calmness and Serenity of good Men, the inward Peace and Comfort they feel, the humble Confidence with which they can look up to a merciful God, whom they in Sincerity (tho' in Imperfection) have serv'd, their Readiness to submit to his Will in quitting this World, and all that is dear and valuable to them in it, and their resigning

signing in Hope their Spirit unto God: He represents, I say, these Things to himself, that he may be encourag'd to make Advancement, and continue constant in a good Life. For the same Purpose I shall take the Liberty to give you some Account of the Reverend Mr. MAISTERS.

He was train'd up at *Oxford*, under the Care of Dr. *Goodwin*, at a Time when the Seeds of Religious Practice, with a Concern equal to that which was express'd to advance in Letters, were thrown into young and tender Minds. How they were receiv'd by this great Man, the Influence they had on his future Conduct sufficiently discovers. By the Force of them he quitted the Advantages of which he might have form'd a reasonable Expectation, and at an Age too when they commonly appear the most alluring; and chose to run all Risques, rather than act contrary to his Light, a happy Presage of future Eminence.

God by the natural Abilities he endued him with, seem'd to design him for considerable Service. He was bless'd with a native Modesty and Mildness of Temper, which were improv'd by Care, and heighten'd by Religion. His Fancy was clear and lively, and continu'd with him to an Age when usually it takes its Flight from Men; and it was so well conducted by him, that it was not suffered to out-run Correctness of Thought, and Exactness of Judgment. His Memory was so strong, that the Abatement of it could not be well discerned by others, any considerable Time before his Removal.

His acquir'd Talents, the long Course of Preaching, for above the Space of fifty Years, which Providence call'd him to, will best discover. Since I have had the Happiness of being acquainted with it, I have heard the good Man treat from this Place,

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Converse with Heaven, by the Divine Spirit, in Strains so high (though the Draught of his own Experience) as in another would have put me in Pain, fearing the Management, and doubting the Event; when with the greatest Skill he has guarded against the wild Airs and extravagant Flights of Enthusiasm. He has with Clearness opened the beauteous Scenes of the Grace of the Gospel, but ever with a View to make them the happy Means (by the Agency of the Spirit) of transforming Mens Minds to the Beauties of Holiness. If what the Apostle asserts, is true (as undoubtedly it is) 2 Tim. 3. 16. *That all Scripture given by Inspiration of God, is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works;* The large and wide View he had of the Sacred Writings, must render him greatly accomplish'd for this Part of the Ministerial Office.

The constant Intercourse which by Prayer he maintain'd with Heaven, join'd to a large Experience of human Life, gave him an uncommon Ability of offering up to God suitable Addresses for others, on particular and special Occasions.

But let us leave the Preacher, and trace the Christian: He knew the justest Sentiments of Revealed Religion, and the highest Flights of Devotion, would not entitle him to the Character of a righteous Man, and give him Hope in his dying Minutes, if he did not add to them all the Virtues of the Christian Life. He therefore, by the Aids of the Divine Spirit, carefully improved them to the Height that may render him a fit Example for others.

He was mild and gentle, humble and modest, temperate and sober, to a Degree not commonly at-

attain'd. His Love extended to such as did bear the Image of God, though they *thought* in a Way different from him. All relative Duties were so well perform'd by him, that 'tis with Difficulty I mention the Father, the Pastor, and the Friend; because they must excite Grief in the Breasts of many. In his Deportment he was modest and grave, yet pleasant and courteous, Virtues hardly practic'd by Persons of his advanc'd Years. His Candour was remarkable; when the Miscarriages of any who ought to have been shining Lights to others reach'd his Ear, he took Occasion from thence to praise the Divine Goodness to him, and though his Concern for the Honour of Religion, and the Recovery of the Person was conspicuous, yet he was far from expressing a Delight to insult and aggravate beyond Measure. He had no such Stains of his own to colour over, as might induce him to make Use of so artful a Conduct. In a Word, he was so happy as to pass a Life of almost 77 Years without a Blemish: Blessed Saint! Uncommon Instance! Worthy our Imitation! So beautiful even is this imperfect Sketch of so amiable a Life!

His Death was equally remarkable: When he had faithfully served his Lord, in a constant though silent Manner (a long Tract of Time of above 50 Years) a few Months before his Death, he fell under a Decay of Nature, without any considerable Sense of Pain, or Uneasiness of Sickness. When I paid him a Visit, three Days before his Decease, he appear'd perfectly serene and calm: The Hope he express'd of future Happiness, was not the rapturous Assurance of some Christians, of less Extent of Thought; the humble and knowing Saint owning his many Imperfections, had Recourse to the Merits and Intercession of his Lord. When I was go-

going to take my Leave of him, he took me by the Hand, and gave me a steady and piercing Look, which had in it a Mixture of Concern; I am so weak (says he) that I cannot now so well pray in my Family: The good Man thought it strange that the Intercourse he had maintain'd with God in his Family so many Years, should be interrupted, little thinking his kind Father would so soon turn his Prayer into Praise. The Manner of his dying was such as in the Letter agreed to the Account Scripture gives of the Departure of true Christians, *viz.* falling asleep in Jesus. And now having mention'd his Death, it will be Time to address,

4. To you his Relatives, and I would recommend to you the calming your Grief. You have the greatest Reason to express a Care that your Sorrow may not swell too high, and grow immoderate, and by breaking all proper Bounds, occasion you to offend your heavenly Father; you are far from sorrowing as they who have no Hope. Were it not that I am sensible of the unavoidable Weakness of human Nature, when a dear and valuable Father is taken away and remov'd by Death; I would have advised you to rejoice on this Occasion in the Divine Goodness. If you had sat down, and coolly thought what your Affection would have invited you to desire (if directed by a regular Judgment) to render the Life and Death of a Father deservedly esteemed by you, remarkably happy; you could scarce have imagin'd any Thing which the Divine Goodness did not indulge to him: And shall not this Reflection lead you, not only calmly to submit and resign to the Will of God, but also gratefully to acknowledge, and delightfully rejoice, in his peculiar and distinguishing Favour? When you find a Tide of Grief return upon you, which

which for the present bears down all before it, after it is a little allay'd, call into your Thoughts what you have been for several Years Witnesses to ; the moving Complaints the departed Saint made of the Imperfection of this State of Temptation and Sorrow, the Cares and Solicitudes he had to attain the End of his Faith, the Salvation of his Soul, and the warm and fervent Desires he offer'd up to his Heavenly Father, that when the *earthly Tabernacle of this House were dissolved, he might have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands,* (2 Cor. 5. 1.) and then repine if you can at his late Removal to the *Joy of his Lord.* How much Reason have you, unless you would incur the Guilt of Ingratitude, to bless God that he continued so long, the wise and good Man to lead you, by his Instruction and Example, into the Path of true and real Happiness, and guard you against the deluding Snares of a deceitful World, when he was for so many Years before his Departure, ripe and mature for the State of Rest and Glory.

When you call to Mind the endearing Management of the pious Man, and ten thousand engaging Circumstances occur to your Thoughts, from the Place which once knew him, and now knows him no more, take Care that you avoid Excess of Sorrow, whereby you would displease him, if he could be suppos'd sensible of it, and which is more, offend your kind and gracious God. Give rather this Turn to your Thought, *there I have seen him express the Ornament of a meek and humble Spirit, here I have known him conceal the Authority of a Parent,* that he might with greater Success impart his wise and prudent Advice ; in *this Place I have heard him with a well conducted Flame offer*

his Devotion to the Divine Throne, mingling there-in a generous Love and tender Concern for the Happiness of Mankind. Thus trace his Virtues, and make the Impression of them deep upon your Mind, that you may be the better capable of resembling him, so far as he did our Blessed Redeemer.

5. Now give me Leave to recommend to you, who for many Years have sat under his publick Instructions, to recollect the plain and useful Discourses he entertain'd you with, in Order to be the better directed in your Conduct. You need not be inform'd, that we are accountable for the Neglect or Improvement of a faithful Ministry, and you cannot pretend the Force of his Doctrine was abated by Want of Circumspection in his own Behaviour : He was far from laying before you any just Occasion of Offence ; he was a bright and shining Light, and it will be expected you should produce Fruit answerable to such a Cultivation. *As the Name of the wicked shall rot, the Memory of the just is blessed.* To retain the Remembrance of the good Man, in the best Manner, is to put on the same Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance, which appeared conspicuous in him.

Suffer me to advise you to be cemented one to another by mutual Love, and reciprocal Forbearance : express a condescending Behaviour to each other, and when it is difficult to settle in your Choice of a Person to succeed one so eminent as Mr. MAISTERS, take Care that you do not, after you have made your Choice, occasion any Uneasiness to him, by invidious Comparison, whereby you will make his Work go on with less Pleasure to him, and Advantage to your selves. Though he may not be

be equal in all Respects to his Predecessor, he may however be rendered, by the Blessing of God, very serviceable; for though Paul plantereth, and Apollos watereth, God (alone) gives the Increase.

I shall put an End to this Discourse,

6. By recommending to every one present a serious Reflection upon the Text, the plain Design of which is to shew the visible and remarkable Difference between bad and good Men, when they are under Trouble, and especially when they come to die. The one will fall under Guilt and Horror, will cling to this World, and be unwilling to leave it, and dread entring upon another, which they can't possibly avoid; and though while Death was at a Distance, they could make a Mock of Sin, and pass their Life in thoughtless Gaiety, yet now it makes its Approach towards them in good Earnest, their Heart melts within them, and Amazement and Terror seize them, and they have not any Support in this needful Time from their former Hope, which now like the Spider's Web, is swept away. The other, on the contrary, have great Ease and Comfort, and sometimes Transport of Joy, from the Reflection upon a holy and religious Course of Life, and comfortable Hope that God will stand by them and support them in Distress; and even when they pass through the Vale of Death, they can look up with an humble Confidence to God, and expect Favour from him, and the Reward of an incorruptible Crown of Glory and Happiness. Let us then be persuaded to pursue the Character of the righteous, that we may gain these great Advantages, and though weak Persons desire to die their Death, without living the Life they lead; let us lay aside those

those deluding Hopes, and press after higher Degrees of Holiness, that our Hope may bear us up in Distress, support us in Death, and occasion to us an abundant Entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

FINIS.

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